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SCARE-CROW;

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BEING

An Infamous Letter,

SENT TO MR. JOHN OLDDEN,

Threatening Destruction to his House, and Violence to
the Person of his Tenant, William Cobbett;

WITH

Olden (John)

REMARKS ON THE SAME.

X

BY PETER PORCUPINE.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED FOR, AND SOLD BY, WILLIAM COBBETT,
NORTH SECOND STREET, OPPOSITE CHRIST CHURCH.

M.DCC.XCVI.



(4)

SCARE-CROW, &c.

ON the nineteenth instant, Mr. Elmslie, partner of Mr. John Olden, called on me with the infamous letter, which, without further preface, I shall lay before the reader.

" To Mr. John Olden Merchant,

" Chesnut Street.

" Sir, you will be pleased to inform and
" assure but " A certain William Cobbett alias
" Peter Porcupine, I am informed is your re-
" nant. This daring scoundrell, not satisfied
" with having repeatedly traduced the people
" of this country, vilified the most eminent
" and patriotic characters among us and grossly
" abused our allies the French, in his detesta-
" ble productions, has now the astonishing ef-
" frontery to expose those very publications at

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“ his window for sale, as well as certain prints
“ indicative of the prowess of our enemies the
“ British and the disgrace of the French. Cal-
“ culating largely upon the moderation or ra-
“ ther *pucellanimity* of our citizens, this puppy
“ supposes he may even *insults* us with impuni-
“ ty. But he will e'er long find himself dread-
“ fully mistaken. 'Tho his miserable publica-
“ tions have not been hitherto considered wor-
“ thy of notice, the late *manifestation* of his
“ impudence and enmity to this country will
“ not be passed over. With a view therefore
“ of preventing your feeling the blow designed
“ for him, I now address you. When the
“ time of retribution arrives, it may not be
“ convenient to discriminate between the inno-
“ cent and the guilty. Your property there-
“ fore may suffer. For depend upon it brick
“ walls will not skreen the rascal from puni-
“ ment when once the business is undertaken.
“ As a friend therefore I advise you to save
“ your property by either compelling Mr. Por-
“ cupine to leave your house or at all events
“ oblige him to cease exposing his abominable
“ productions or any of his courtley prints at
“ his window for sale. In this way only you
“ may avoid danger to your house and perhaps
“ save the rotten *carcase* of your tenant for the
“ present.”

"A HINT."

I have copied this loving epistle, word for word and letter for letter, preserving the false orthography, as the manner of spelling may probably lead some of my readers to a discovery of the writer.

When Mr. Vecessimus Knox (who is a sort of a Democrat) publishes his next edition of Elegant Epistles, he will do well to give this a place amongst them ; for, it is certainly a master-piece in its way. It will be a good pattern for the use of future russians, who wish to awe a man into silence, when they are incapable of resisting him in print. But, the worst of it will be, the compiler will not have it in his power to say, that this was attended with success.

If I am right in my guess, the family of the author of this powder blunderbus makes a considerable figure in the Tyburn Chronicle. His grand-father was hanged for house-breaking, and his *papa* came to the southern part of these States on his travels, by the direction of a righteous judge and twelve honest men.

So much for the author ; now to his scrawl.

The cut-throat acts in character. He proceeds exactly in the manner of the Revolutionary Tribunal at Paris : that is, he arraigns, condemns and executes, all in the space of about five minutes. The first charge he brings against me is, that I have "repeatedly traduced the "people of this country." I take notice of this, not because it is found in this base and

cowardly letter, but because it has long been the theme of all those who wish to decry my performances, and because I am willing to let slip no opportunity of declaring my respect for a public, from whom those performances have ever, from the publication of my first essay to the present moment, met with the most liberal encouragement.

Let any stupid member of the broken-up, back-door clubs point out, if he can, one single sentence in the writings of Peter Porcupine, where the people of the United States are traduced. 'Tis true, I have not fallen into the beaten track of confounding the good with the bad, of lumping the enemies and the friends of public happiness together, and fawning on them indiscriminately. I have not said that they are all virtuous and wise, and that virtue and wisdom is to be found amongst them alone. No; I am no spaniel, nor will I be one. I address myself to the good sense of my readers, and to that alone: if they want a buffoon or whining parasite, I am not their man.

But, I must do the people of this country the justice to say, that this is not their taste. They stand in no need of base flattery. Their love of truth has been fully exemplified in the rapid sale of my essays, while their contempt for the popular parasites has been unequivocally expressed in the fate of all the miserable attempts that have been made to oppose their progress. I have received letters of thanks and congratulation from every quarter of the

Union, even from Richmond in Virginia: and not from "British Agents," but from native Americans, real lovers of their country. I have received offers of service from persons of the first consequence in their divers towns and countries, persons whom I never saw or heard of previous to their communications. Let any fawning scribbler on liberty and equality produce such testimony of public approbation, if he can; but let me say, I do not know of any such.

But, I have, it seems, "vilified some of the most eminent and patriotic characters amongst us." 'Tis pity, to be sure, that these patriotic characters should be vilified more than they have vilified themselves. What could I, or anybody else, say to vilify a man, for instance, a man who had made overtures to sell his country for "a few thousands of dollars;" or another, who had done all in his power "to stop the wheels of government" by stirring men up to open rebellion against it? It is not I who have vilified the *eminent patriots*; it is Citizen Joseph Fouchet, the old Father Confessor on the banks of the Schuylkill; when he calls them, "the pretended patriots of America," and when he says, they "have already their prices." Surely I might take upon me to repeat the expressions of the Minister of France, of our good and faithful allies, without being chargeable with vilifying the *eminent patriots*. And, if I have laughed at little Mr. Swanwick, what have I done more than every man, every woman, and every child, in the United States, at least every one that ever saw his person,

listened to his harangues, or read his poetry? I wonder what I have done, that I must not laugh, that I must remain in a corner as demure as a cat, while every body else are bursting their sides.

In France, the only country in Europe (according to *Doctor Faundice's* account of it) which is *not* in chains. Under that free and happy sky, the mild and humane rulers often issue decrees forbidding people to weep or look sad, on pain of death; even at the moment they hear the last groans of their parents; but they have never yet carried their *douce humanité* so far as to forbid men to smile. They permit, nay encourage, both men and women to sing and laugh and cut capers, at the very foot of the guillotine, while the pavement is running with human blood; and yet my cruel and inflexible persecutors will not suffer me to laugh, when I hear them bawling at a civic festival, or see them boxing with an old image that they had formerly adored.

Again, the cut-throat says I have “grossly abused our allies the French.” This is false. By the treaty made between this country and the king of France, the French nation is, in my opinion, no more the ally of the United States than the Chinese are. Louis the sixteenth was, indeed, the ally, “the great and “good ally” (to make use of the words of Congress) of this country; and I leave any one who has read my works, to determine whether I have ever abused him or not. The queen of

France, the calumniated Antoinette, was the first foreigner, except some generous Englishmen, that advanced a shilling in the American cause : have I ever abused her memory ? It was not I, though it was an Englishman, that cut off her head, and besprinkled her garments with blood, on a sign, hung over a public road. It was not I that guillotined her husband, in an automaton, every day, from nine in the morning to nine at night, for the diversion of the inhabitants of Philadelphia.* I did not rejoice at

* Advertisement, extracted from the Daily Advertiser of the 21st Nov. 1794.

“ E X H I B I T I O N,

“ *Of Figures in Composition at full Length,*

“ (Corner of Second and Callowhill Streets)

“ —At the Sign of the Black Bear—

“ L A T E King of France, together with his Queen, taking her last Farewel of him in the Temple, the day preceding his execution. The whole is a striking likeness, in full stature, and dressed as they were at the time.

“ The King is represented standing, his Queen on her knees by his right side, overwhelmed with sorrow and ready to faint, the King looking tenderly at her.

“ Second is the Scaffold on which he was executed, whereon the King stands in full view of the Guillotine ; before him is a Priest on his knees with a Crucifix in one hand, and a Prayer Book in the other ; on the side of the Guillotine stands the executioner prepared to do his duty.

the death of an innocent young prince, whose birth had been celebrated with uncommon pomp in this city, in the prosperous days of his father. I never reviled the gallant French officers and army who served in this country, and to whom America is really indebted; but, on the contrary, I have ever regretted their fate, and expressed my detestation of the bar-

“ When the first signal is given, the Priest rises on his feet, the King lays himself on the block, where he is secured; the executioner then turns, and prepares to do his duty; and when the second signal is given, the executioner drops the knife and severs the head from the body in one second; the head falls in a basket, and the lips which are first red, turn blue; the whole is performed to the life, by an invisible machine, without any perceivable assistance.

“ Made by the first Italian Artist, of the name of

“ C O L U M B A.

“ The workmanship has been admired by the most professed judges, wherever it has been seen.

“ * * * The proprietors humbly hope for the encouragement of the public, as nothing shall be wanting on their part to render the exhibition *pleasing and satisfactory* to their patrons.

“ Price 3*s*. Children half price.

“ To be seen from 9 o'clock in the morning, until 9 at night.”

This exhibition actually continued for several months, and yet no one ever threatened to murder the proprietor.

barians who have dipped their hands in their blood.

The next charge is; I have "the astonishing effrontery to expose for sale, certain prints, indicative of the prowess of the British and the disgrace of the French." Here the hang-in-chains writer alludes to a print, entitled, "Earl Howe's Decisive Victory over the French fleet, on the first of June, 1794." This print has had a vast concourse of admirers. I had but two of them, one was sold instantly, and I have had more than five hundred applications for the other. What is very singular, is, that one third part of those who have wished to purchase this print were French Republicans. The print is not sold, nor shall it be. I will keep it in my window as long as any violence is talked of, and when that ceases, I will have it put in a gilt frame and hung up in a conspicuous part of my house.

This offensive print is no more than a true representation of the action of the famous *first of June*, and if it be "indicative of the disgrace of our allies," it is no fault of mine. If defeat is disgrace, they were certainly most shockingly disgraced on that day. But, I thought it had been long ago agreed on, that, though the fleet got a drubbing, and a pretty decent one too, the victory was, *in fact*, on the side of the French. I am sure Barrere told the French people so, and I am sure most of our News-papers told the people of America the same story. How many believed them I

will not pretend to say; but if it was a victory, *in fact*, I am treating people with a representation of it, that's all, and am by no means exposing what is "indicative of British prowess."

When William Penn was tracing out his beloved city of Philadelphia, if any one had told him, that the time would come, when a man should be threatened with murder for offering to sale, in one of the streets, a print "indicative of British prowess," I much question if the good man, though a quaker, would not have said that it was a d—ned lie. Poor old fellow! he little dreamed what was to happen at the close of the "enlightened eighteenth century."

I could turn back to American publications, in which the prowess of Britons is the pleasing theme; in which the French are called, what I never called them, "poor effeminate poltroons." I could bring my readers back to the time, when they set the savages on to scalp the people of these States, and when the people of these States solicited the King of Great Britain to march an army against them. Has the American Revolution entirely changed the dispositions, affections, and even nature of the two rival nations? Did Great Britain lose every spark of courage, generosity and virtue, when she lost America? That event certainly could not metamorphose the then inhabitants of the Island, nor could it have any great effect on their children, or at least I presume so. The people of the Unit-

ed States have solemnly declared, in their declaration of Independence, that the British nation are by nature *just* and *magnanimous*; and will they now swallow their words at the command of the hirelings of the *devastators of France*?

To return to the print “indicative of British “prowess;” have I not as good a right to exhibit proof of this prowess at my window as the Democrats have to exhibit the proofs of theirs on the front of the church opposite it? The half-destroyed bust of George II. remains as a monument of their valour, and why should I not be permitted to expose a print to perpetuate the valour of Earl Howe and his gallant fleet? These two pieces are, besides, necessary to the explanation of each other; for, when a stranger asks, why the bust of the old king was so unmercifully mangled, the person he addresses himself to, shows him the naval victory of Lord Howe. “There, Sir,” says he, “is the fatal cause.” If the impertinent querist goes on, and asks, how George the Second, who died upwards of thirty years ago (and whose bust remained untouched during the whole of the American war) could deserve this rough treatment on account of the drubbing given to the French fleet in 1794, we cut him short at once, by telling him, that he is a rank aristocrat, and totally unfit to live in a land of freedom.

Mr. Oldden is told, that there is but one way left of saving his house, and that is, by obliging me to cease exposing my “courty

“prints” at my window for sale. It would seem by this, that the cut-throats look upon me as Oldden’s vassal; I shall convince them that I am not. To oblige me to desist from any branch of my lawful occupation would prove the toughest job that ever my landlord undertook, should he be silly enough to attempt it. As to obliging me to quit his house, there are no hopes there neither; for I have a lease of it, and a lease that I will hold in spite of all the sans-culottes in America.

But, what does the cut-throat mean by “*courtly prints*.” I have Ankerstorm the regicide; that can be no courtly print at any rate. I have, indeed, the portraits of the late king and queen of France; but as they are dead, one would imagine that they could create no alarm. Poor Louis little thought, when he sent hither those portraits of himself and his queen, which now hang up in the Congress-House, that the day would come, when a bookseller would be threatened with murder for exhibiting his likeness, in the capital of the Union. Others have exhibited him at their windows, stretched on the scaffold; they had a right so to do; every man to his taste, and I to mine.—”Tis true, I have the portraits of Billy Pitt and Lord Grenville and several other noble personages; but then, I have Marat and Lepelletier, by way of rubbing off as I go. I have a right reverend Father in God in one corner of my window, and if I could procure that right irreverent Father in the Devil, Tom Paine, I would hoist him up in the other; for want of him I have Doctor

Priestley, who, upon a shift, is very capable of supplying his place.

I have some groups, too, executed by order of the French Convention, which, I humbly presume, will not be called "*courtly*." The taking of the Bastile decorates one pane of my window, as it did the Birmingham Club-Room; the French people on their marrow-bones acknowledging the existence of a God, by order of Robespierre, decorates another; and a third is ornamented with a representation of the "glorious "victory" obtained over the Swiss guards, on the tenth of August, 1792. I am promised a print of Poor Richard, in the arms of a brace of angels, who are carrying him off God knows whither.

I am sure, now, all these things are republican enough; and if my sovereign Lords will but please to take my whole collection into view, I cannot think that they will find me so criminal as I have been represented.

And then, there are my books and stationery, almost the whole of which is English. I have been looking round, and cannot for my life find any other American book than Adams's Defence of the American Constitutions, and Peter Porcupine's works. The latter of these my sovereigns have proscribed, and the former speaks about the *well-born*: so that, unless my gracious Lords will condescend to permit me to sell these offensive things, I must shut up shop. But, if I must, I hope all the

rest of the trade will be compelled to do the same. There is Mr. Campbell has published Hume's History of England, a book as full as it can hold of king's and queen's pictures, and *aristocracy* of all sorts and sizes, and contains, besides, a great number of instances of "British prowess," and of "the disgrace of our allies." Mr. Dobson too, and Mr. Carey, have published books on *Royal* paper, and Mr. Brown has dared to publish his gazette even on *Imperial*. These are crimes that I have never either committed or attempted. Is not this anti-republicanism to the last degree, and a downright insult on the citizens of the United States?—Again, there is Mr. Young, and several others that I could mention, who have the assurance to expose for sale, Walkden's *Royal British* Ink-Powder, stamped with the "tyrant George's" arms. Shall all this go unpunished, and shall poor I be eat alive merely for exposing a print or two? Forbid it justice! Democratic justice forbid it!

Nor, should a strict inquisition take place, will the great Mr. Franklin Bache himself come off blameless. He has informed the public, that he is in correspondence with *Peter Pindar*, and it is notorious that this Peter is not only an *aristocrat*, but a declared *royalist*. He has given Tom Paine the severest lashing he ever met with. And, as to "trading the people of this country," does not Peter traduce them, when, in speaking of the United States, he says:

“ Where sons of liberty their paens sing;
 “ And every scoundrel convict is a King.”

Is not this traducing the people? And yet Mr. Bache publicly boasts of his intimacy with this fellow, and takes infinite pains to propagate his works! “ Birds of a feather will flock together,” says the old proverb, and it is no more than reasonable to suppose, that Mr. Bache, whatever mask he may choose to wear, participates in the sentiments of his friend Pinder.

Nay, even Doctor Franklin was an aristocrat, and an abominable one too, as may be seen in the very last item of his last will and testament. “ I bequeath,” says he, “ to my worthy friend George Washington, my gold-headed cane, furnounted with a *Liberty-Cap*: if it were a *Sceptre* he is worthy of it.” Thus, you see, reader, after all the Doctor’s clamour against kings, he thought a *Sceptre* something better than a *Liberty-Cap*. That the Doctor was sincere here there is no doubt; men are generally so upon their death-beds, howsoever profound their hypocrisy may have been through life.—Poor Richard certainly deserves to be tumbled from his niche for this dying confession, and, I trust, “ when the day of retribution comes,” as my cut-throat terms it, he will not be forgotten. ’Tis ridiculous, to be sure, to lay violent hands on a statue, but as this kind of heroism has made a very considerable figure in this “ Age of Reason,” I do

not see why old Lightning-Rod should escape any more than another.

Doctor Priestly, in his first American publication, congratulates himself on being now got into a country, where he can publish his sentiments, be they what they may, without any fear of persecution from either church or state. But he had forgot that there was the Democratic gang, more intolerant than either. What will he say, when he sees the letter of my eves-dropping cut-throat? Will he not begin to repent of having so bitterly complained of the want of liberty of the press in England? One of his excuses for quitting his country was, that he had threatening letters sent to him. Perhaps my cut-throat thinks that all Englishmen are like the Doctor; but he will find himself mistaken: all the stink pots of all the democrats in the Western hemisphere shall never drive me from America, nor make me take coach in disguise, as the Birmingham philosopher did.

The Democratic Societies (for they were then in existence) might, perhaps, have informed Doctor Priestly, that he should be permitted to print whatever he pleased, and, if so, he might well venture to say that the press was free for him; but, unless he had received such previous intimation, his boast of enjoying the liberty of the press was made very much at hazard.

These people plead the liberty of the press, in the fullest extent of the word; they claim a right

to print and publish whatever they please; they tell you that free discussion must lead to the truth, and a thousand other arguments they have always ready at their fingers ends to oppose to every kind of restraint. They have calumniated the best of governments and the best of men; they revile all that is good and all that is sacred, and that too in language the most brutal and obscene; and, if they are accused of indecency, or called on for proofs of what they advance, they take shelter in their sanctuary, *the liberty of the press*. But, on the other hand, if any one has courage enough to oppose them, and is so happy as to do it with success; if the mildest of their expressions are retorted, they instantly threaten their opponents with violence and even murder. Their doctrine is, that the press is free for them, and them alone. This is democratic liberty of the press; just such as is enjoyed in that free and happy country whose revolutionary career the people of this country are called upon to imitate.

Much has been said and sung about the Sedition bills of Mr. Pitt, and the restraint on the liberty of the press in England; but, whatever that restraint may be, it is by law. The law says, that there are such and such restraints, and, therefore he who trespasses, deserves punishment. The laws of this country say, that the press is free, and we well know what invurious comparisons are continually made between this country and England, in that respect; but, if men are to be murdered, or have their houses burnt for exercising this much talked of liberty, it is time to cease giving it

a place among the advantages that the United States enjoy over the "mother country," as it is sometimes called in derision. When a foreigner arrives in Great Britain, he looks at the written law; there he sees how far he is permitted to carry the use of the press; and, so long as he keeps within the bounds prescribed, his person and property is safe. There is no subaltern power, whose consent he has to obtain, before he dares publish a book, or expose a print for sale. His house is not threatened with destruction, because his window exhibits what is indicative of the prowess of his nation, and of the disgrace of their enemies; at any rate, he is not threatened with murder, for having stepped forward in defence of the laws and the government of the country.

When I first took up the pen, I found a good deal of difficulty (as the public will see one of these days) to get access to the press at all; not because the manuscript I offered contained any thing libellous or immoral, but because it was not adapted to what was supposed to be the taste of the public. In fact, the press was at the time, generally speaking, as far as related to what is usually termed politics, in the hands of a daring and corrupt faction, who, by deceiving some, and intimidating others, had blocked up every avenue to true information. My publications were looked upon as so many acts of rebellion against this despotic combination, and, therefore, every possible trick was essayed to discredit them and their author; all these tricks have, however, proved vain.

My object, and my only object, in writing, was to contribute my mite towards the support of a government under which I enjoyed peace and plenty. This object I have pursued as steadily as my small share of leisure would allow me, and that I have not laboured in vain, the present conduct of the democratic faction most amply proves. The cut-throat's letter which I now lay before the public, shows to what a state of desperation they are driven. They at first made some pitiful attempts to answer me: those sunk out of sight and were forgotten for ever. They then vomited forth calumnies against the author, calumnies so totally void of all truth and even probability, that even their own herd did not believe a word they contained.* Next they published a blasphemous book under my assumed name: this failed also, and the city of New York has witnessed their shameful defeat as well as Philadelphia. At last, smarting all over with the lashes I had given them, and fearing a continuation, they have had recourse to

* Among other abominable falsehoods, contained in the Aurora concerning me, are, my having got my living by thieving in London, and my having refused to pay my taxes in this country.—With respect to the first I will only observe, that when I came hither, I brought a letter of recommendation from the American Ambassador at the Hague to Mr. Jefferson, then Secretary of State; and, as to the latter, the small portion of taxes that I have had to pay, has been paid without hesitation. No man, either in a private or public capacity, ever called on me twice for payment of the same sum. The taxes for the property I now rent I have paid up to January next. I owe nobody, neither the State nor the people of the State, a farthing: let the members of the *ei-de-vant* democratic society say as much if they can.

the poor sneaking trick of a threatening letter. A trick of robbers, who have not courage enough to venture their necks. I have often been congratulated on my triumph over this once towering, but fallen and despicable faction; and I now possess undeniable proof that the triumph is completed. It is in vain that the cut-throat would persuade us, that the democrats do not think my "miserable productions worthy of notice;" the very scrawl of this their stupid secretary proves that they have dreaded them, and that they yet dread them. If they despised my "miserable productions," why not laugh at them, as I do at theirs? Why not suffer them to rot on the shelf, like the political Progress of Britain, or be kicked about the street, like the Aurora? Threatening Mr. Oldden with the destruction of his house, unless he could prevail on me to cease publishing, is curious enough in itself; but it is much more curious, when accompanied with the observation, that my publications are *miserable and unworthy of notice.*

Of all the stupid inventions that ever entered the brains of this bungling clan, the cut-throat letter to Mr. Oldden is the most ridiculous. Had they studied for years, they could not have found out any thing that would have pleased me so well. It will for ever silence their clamours about the liberty of the press; it will prove to the people, most fully, the truth of what I have always told them; that is, that these "pretended patriots," these advo-

cates for liberty and equality, would, if they had become masters, have been a diyan of cruel and savage tyrants. That they know nothing of liberty but the name, and that they make use of that name merely to have the power of abolishing the thing. It will prove to all the world, that they have long dreaded me, that they still dread me, and that I despise them.

I shall conclude with this unequivocal declaration; that, as to the past, I would not retract a sentence, nor a single expression of what I have written, if the most bloody of the most bloody democrats had his foot upon my breast and his long knife at my throat; and that, for the future, I will continue to publish and expose for sale whatever I please, and that I will never cease to oppose, in some way or other, the enemies of the country in which I live, so long as one of them shall have the impudence to show his head. Hitherto I have given acids only, I will now drench them with vinegar mixed with gall.

From the free Press of
WILLIAM COBBETT,
July 22d, 1796.

E N D.

William Gobetti

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END.